

March 1st 1979

Dear Mr. Irwin. And it came in less a lamp. 30° and ice on the bird bath - Run out for the first time in days - it's been dribbles of rain the past month - but we are still more than half behind normal for this date. I know how nerve wracking the drive from Palmdale to Independence in the snow storm - hope you never have to encounter a sand storm on a dark night! The March Desert Magazine has a picture of "my" old school house in Darwin and an article by Annis M. Cippitt, fine picture of Frances Black and our jail, which never held a prisoner. Her article was mostly accurate - so often writers drive up and down the main street & go home and write the history of Darwin and she miss - spells Pat Reddy and the discovery of the Defiance - Several Mexicans were staking out claims 1874 - a couple white men were watching and decided to "jump" the claims and a fight started & so the name defiance developed - when we were kids in 1900's a few original old timers were still around and would entertain us with stories of the beginning of Darwin and Darwin French had nothing to do with the founding of Darwin - he & his party were searching for the so called Blotch Gun - sight in the 1860's & went through old Coso country to the south 8 miles and each writer much exaggerate the population if it ever reached 1000 that is stretching it. On July 3rd 1875 water arrived in Darwin and uproarious celebration and those on the scene liberly drenched, as I've written before the first wooden building erected on Feb 20th 1875 was E.A. Reddy's Saloon on Main Street. Pat Reddy's brother, Ned ... Harris moved his printing office from Panamint City on March 18th 1876 The "Lucy Jim" was located 1875 - a couple three miles up &

over the hill north from The Defiance - which was an incline
shaft. The smelter for the Defiance was up from town, where
the Hill is now and the "Jim" smelter was in the wash, just
under the bank from our cemetery. when we were kids most
of both smelters were still as left when last worked - several
little smelters - traces of were still around - things were left as
last used - we did not have vandals in those days. In late
1880's Frank Leathery was appointed care taker of all the
Defiance properties - including several buildings in town - one
of which he lived in - on the corner where the Out Post is now
there was a big blacksmith shop and big barns and corals.
he later against our school house on north side - his job
included care of the pipe line and he did his job well all
the years - until his death in Feb 1917. and most of us were
by busked side to help him up the long trail" As to stage
stops from Mojave to Keeler, the road then was on the ^{right} side
of the lake, 6 horse teams - stage canvas covered - 2
seats in ride facing each other - baggage rack on top, as many
as possible passengers were crammed inside & on top and
a privilege to ride up on the drivers seat - first stop and
change of horses where Olancha is now - next at Little Lake
next either Indian Wells - if the station was there or at
Coyote Holes - next in Red Rock Canyon - then came
Cinco & Mojave. When Cerro Gordo was working the stages
were packed coming & going - in the 1900's if the stage &
a freight team met. the stage pulled off the road and cut
a "figure eight" in the sage brush & back on the road, every
one hanging on for dear life - there use to be a story told of
one trip with a China man aboard and a school teacher -
the wild flowers were blooming and the teacher asked the driver

37 if he would stop so she could pick a bouquet? ^{ad} later on the china man called to the driver - "stop, me pickum flower too". Anyone who did not live and experience those "good old days" have missed a lot. up to the 1910's the stages ^{etc} ran - then came the Klein Princess in late '80's and the R.P. out of Mojave in 1910's and the coming of the automobiles - from Mojave to Bishop - then the railroad finally reached Owens. Give a memorable trip on a six horse stage in 1907 from "Joburg" (Johannesburg) to Ballarat - the driver Dominique Estabarn was a friend of ours and so I got to ride up on the seat with him. 6 passengers inside, including my mother - the long 75 mile trip - left "Joburg" at 6 A.M. first change at Garden Station - an oasis in the desert then - now little trace can be found. Searles on the railroad is about where it was. Garden - fruit trees - fine food - freighters and any who stopped over. long table - good company - next change in Salt Creek canyon. really a wide sandy wash - next at Searles big red barn on the edge of dry Searles Lake - about where Irona is now. Searles brother built the barn when they worked the soda - original discoverers. the change stations averaged 12 or 15 miles apart - some were further apart - a hard life on a horse. from Searles to Ballarat was a long run & over the Plate Range & into Panamint Valley - the old road on north side of the range was narrow and twisting - sharp turns - and we came down that road with the horses on the run & me hanging on beside Dominique & those inside being tossed around and Dominique yelling at the horses and popping the "4 horse whip" - and we got to the bottom right side up! Where ever mines were working those stages were packed with miners coming and going. they

went the fancy Concord stage - were just high spring wagons
2 seats facing and canvas around that could be rolled up in
hot weather. did have a boot in back & small one under the
dash board in front - just above the wheel team. When Cheesebrough
finished the last contract from "Joburg" to Ballarat in 19100
contracts with mail ran 4 years. by then the town was dead &
Johannesburg - where the spur railroad from Barstow was
on its last legs - the Randeburg just over the hill a mile was
still lively - Yellow Aster mill running - 120 stamps dropping
could be heard for miles. . . . Cheesebrough gave a couple of the
stages to Indian George & care for & were at his place at
Warm Springs for years - gradually falling to pieces after he died.
he took good care of them and in 1931 we stopped to see him -
my sons & I and a couple friends and I took a picture of the boys
on the old stage. I'll look through my old films and see if
I have it. . . . Furniture in our homes in Darwin in 1900s
& on to last fire 1918 - were any thing left from early days -
Barthory had a beautiful marble topped mahogany bed room
suite - it burned in the 1918 fire - brought in by the do fence
in the 1870s - 1880s and used up at the mine and brought
down when Frank became watch man - it was used by his daughter
Eugenie (Jenny) when we were kids & up to the fire - he died in
the bed. most of us had odds & ends of furniture - life was
simple & we didn't require much - a good bed - table and chairs
congo leum rug - easier to keep clean than carpets - a bucket
of water & a mop did the job - good kitchen cook stoves - a
good oven was important - everyone baked bread - pies and
cakes - later mostly so the men had a good lunch packed
heating stoves - later years we got kerosene cook stoves -
that was something! 4 burners and an oven on one end side.
medicines? well lets see - cod liver oil - (Castor oil) some of the

5) Miners when on a drunk and the saloon "treated" them
took to drinking "Triple H" used to rub on aching muscles - but
mostly alcohol - unbelievable how those drunks would down
the stuff - ^{and horse liniment!} Carters Little Liver Pills - about all I can think
of - never being much for medicine - Bayer tablets came
later - to late to help us in the 1918-19 flu epidemic and unless
one went through that - they don't know what real flu is.
In reading your letter as I write - don't talk of "rambling" just
look at what I do! Most over night stage stops - were
cots furnished - miners generally packed their own bed roll -
if they didn't - were not considered good workers. Some places
had special rooms, nicely furnished for special travelers - ladies -
we always looked forward to Coyote Holes to stay over night
were friends of Raymond & always fine food & good beds if one
wanted them. from our camp - Millsbaugh to Coyote Holes
was 55 miles - a long trip with a buggy team - freight team took
2 days & of course always had their own grub box & bed roll &
camped by their wagon & mules. once in a great while we
might stop at Indian Wells if we knew the folks there - was
a stage stop as was Coyote Holes 9 miles further - where I loved
to stay and hear the tales of early days. ... March 4th Got
side tracked here. And during our 1918-19 flu - we did not
have aspirin or fruit juices. That Dr. were prescribing - quinine
was used for most illness - and the drunks would drink
Lemon extract - & get the alcohol - which it seemed to be mostly
of. The name "Joburg" was given with love for Johannesburg -
as was Frisco - for San Francisco. "In going up to Frisco"
Los Angeles did not rate very high - until late 1900's - Frisco
was the town and the San Francisco Examiner the paper to
read - most miners were Democrats & Los Angeles Times looked
down on as a Republican newspaper - Before our 2 fires
Aug 17th 1917 & July 7th 1918 we had nice furniture - and where

Cuppitt writes in "The March Desert" that most of the "homeless"
lost Darwin is not true. The cause of our 1917 fire was in
our old home after we moved down the street to a new one -
George ^{Reynolds} ~~Bennedy~~ & his wife moved in - he was driving stage
& Keesler & this morning was still in bed after a drunk - she
decided to leave - packed her suit cases & set them by the side
door - which opened into the living room - bed room in front
& kitchen in back - she stuffed the kitchen stove with a lot
of papers - lit it & left the damper open - and went across
the street to see Cuddeheys - the stove pipe got red hot and
set fire to the chimney - every one gathered - nothing can be
done in Darwin when a house catches fire - just stand by
and watch - then she said "George is in bed" so several of the
men went over to the front window of the bed room & tried
to pull him out - he kept hanging on to the bed to get his
bottle - finally they pulled him out butt first - and ran
down to the store to get a pair of overalls to put on him - as he
"saved" her husband, but she lost everything else - as of
course 2 blocks of the town burned on east side of street -
(the other side burned 1918 - and all the original buildings
gone, except our old school house & the Thompson house up
at the end of the street - with the store & Post Office gone
Mamie Reynolds went to Independence - her home before
1910 when she came to Darwin as Mrs. Silas Reynolds - I
don't know why these writers don't get their facts straight -
we old Darwinians are all gone and the ones who live there
now - know nothing of us or the town as it was - now full
of strangers - Frances Black came in 1940 - The original
jail was built in 1875 - a subscription was started and
\$607⁰⁰ was raised for the purpose of building a "Calaboose"
the contract was let to a Mr. P. P. Gerrish - Size 14' x 18'
to build it - 2 cells and a guard room - entrance - of heavy
4 x 6 timbers - laid on top of each other and all firmly bolted

7) together - making walls 6" in thickness - one little barred window in back, high up - barred doors into cells & solid iron entrance door with chain & padlock. "hotter than the huns of - in summer" - no record of prisoners - drunk stole it off. In 1920 it burned down - how we never knew. - This present jail built of corrugated iron in 1920 after original burned down on same site - it was built 1876 - "Barro Alley" as we kids named the wash on east side of town - 1900's - this one also is not known to hold a prisoner. In our 1918-19 Flu - Dr. Irving J. Woodin, beloved by all, down through the years, came to Independence in 1904 - ill with T.B. - ministering to the ill, as his health improved - first in his horse & buggy - later a little Ford roadster - his driver - his bottle of whiskey in his satchel. he traveled day & night and in 1918-19 was also Coroner - so he visited the sick & sign the death certificates - was on the road, they were not oiled then - people were well "today and dead in the morning" - so when people talk about having the Flu now - they have no idea of what the real was like unless they experienced it and few are left who did. Back to our furniture - wood cooking stoves and heaters - one - two or 3 rooms - later wall paper was used - but old dapp - cheese cloth ceilings - which had a tendency to sag. we were comfortable & content - we "didn't know any better" and did with what we had. As to the meandering line of desert varnished rocks in Panamint Valley - I've never seen or heard of them and doubt if Panamint George or his family had any thing to do with them - I've traveled the valley on horse back & wagon & late years by car & have never seen what you describe - most likely done by late comers at the mine of colored rocks that was hauled out back in the 1960's and may still be working. is on the West foot hills of the Argus range - north of Shepherds Canyon & south of Snow's Canyon and The Minnetta. (Gunn's old mine.) Water Canyon has no history

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always impassable, except on horse back - sandy and boulder
strewn - heads at La Motte Springs just off Junction Flat and
empties south of Shepherd's Canyon - stolen horses were run
that way & on to Wingate Pass across Panamint Valley north
of State Range & on to Barstow and shipped east. John
Shepherd back in 1876 when Cozo was busy - built a road
up from Owen's Ranch - in a wash, just below the rolling hills
where road is now - He angled across Centennial Flat & dropped
down to Cozo - later he extended the road over by Cole Springs -
not named until 1898 when Dave Cole and family came over
from Ro. Fork & took up 160 acres and ran horses - the
road continued on to Junction Flat 20 miles - across & up to
the head of what is now called Shepherd's Cañon and where
our mining camp - Millsbaugh - was located in 1898-1900.
the canyon was rough & narrow, but he got the road thro
& angled across Panamint Valley to Panamint City - by then
in its dying days - when Ballarat was started 1895 or later
a couple years - the road went straight across the valley
from the mouth of the canyon to Ballarat. one time when
I was hunting horses I went down Water Canyon to the mouth
& then around to the mouth of Shepherd's Canyon & on home, a
couple of box canyons in between - one is Riley Canyon.
Shepherd's Canyon had fine springs - the first 3 miles below
us - we had 2 wells - both there & water in them - unless the
navy has filled them in as they have our shaft and the
entrance to our 1900' tunnel - never know they were there
now, except for the dumps - The main plant we knew
is Mountain Tea - Norman Tea & various other names for
the same plant - jointed green stems - round - they used other
but we did not - one was fine for kidney & back ailments, as
was the Mountain Tea. The other had an Indian name but
I do not recall it - many moons having passed. Indian
George came one day - Mamma was alone and laid up with
a kidney attack - he said "I fix it" left and came - I'm running late!

with some kind of herb - built a fire in the stove and made
a strong tea - it did the trick - no one could ask for better
friends than our Indians were - honest and interested in
all "the white man's ways" always welcome - use the blacksmith
shop and never so much as took a horse shoe nail. The
baskets were made of split willow - dried & then soaked
in water as used - the red was from the Yucca tree roots
the strips coiled and straightened as used - sewing reeds were
finely split - the plants grew around Junction Flat and
also at Winter home Warm Springs in Panamint Valley - now
called Indian Reservation - which you passed when in the
valley - on the east side a few miles north of Ballarat - about
at the mouth of Surprise Canyon. You might plan a trip up
to Panamint City - tho I don't know if the road is open now.
but if you can get to the mouth and live & live - it is worth
the trip - tho vandals have been there - but in 1931 the place
was about as when abandoned in late 1870's - tho has been
worked off and on down through the years - tho I understand
now, even the tall smoke stack has been demolished and
buildings gone since then. I have forgotten what Indian names
I learned - most are long sounding, even for simple things -
they wanted to learn the white man's names for things - I'm re-
peating myself - but trying to make things clear and it all
was many years ago. but firmly engraved in my mind - I
love my "home country" and memories - no place could
have been finer to grow up in and the few people around
and our miners and prospectors - of which Shorty Harris
was one - saw him last in Ballarat in June 1931 - was
living in the old adobe school house, a real "single blanket"
prospector - located millions and died in the "Poor House"
Big Pine Sanatorium a good friend of our beloved Charley Brown
who did care for "Shorty" in his last years - We will never see
the likes of our old timers again. "They don't make them" - well
enough for this round. enjoy hearing from you and coming at our
Museum. As always with Best wishes "Elm" (Elizabeth L. The cham)

P.S. My letter "go as she looks" if I read them over they probably wouldn't!